

more oil offshore and in Alaska. But once again environmental extremists who almost always are very wealthy people do not want us drilling for any more oil.

Some of these extremists even have said that they think our oil prices should be two or three times higher than they are so that more people will be forced to use mass transit. But this would really be harmful and would put the final nail in the coffin of some of our small towns and some of our rural areas where mass transit is not available and where people have to drive sometimes long distances to get to good jobs. Do we really want to force more people into our big cities that are already overcrowded and where more pollution occurs? If we want lower prices for everything and more good jobs, we need more domestic oil production.

The very misnamed Arctic Wildlife Refuge, which has 19.8 million acres of land in Alaska, could produce many billions more barrels of oil if we would just allow drilling on far less than 1 percent of its territory. Most of this refuge is nothing but a frozen, huge brown tundra that does not have a bush or a tree on it or at least not one within many, many miles. If we opened up only 12,000 acres, far less than 1 percent of this refuge, we could get to billions of barrels of oil; and it could be done in an environmentally safe way and without hurting even a single animal or cutting even one tree. Yet once again wealthy environmental extremists do not want us to do this, even though their actions are hurting the poor and working people of this country most of all and are also helping keep young college graduates from getting good, high-paying jobs.

These are just some things that I hope many people in this country and in particular my colleagues here in the Congress will consider in the months ahead.

STOP SPLINTERING FAMILIES; START APPLYING AMERICAN FAIRNESS AND JUSTICE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SUNUNU). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to say that we must stop the splintering of American families that resulted from the so-called immigration reform act passed in 1996. We must stop deporting hardworking legal, I repeat, legal immigrants who are raising stable families only because they committed a minor infraction years or even decades ago. We must stop hauling away parents in the middle of the night in front of their children, and we must stop denying these people now in detention the most basic constitutional rights that we in America believe everyone should have.

Yet that is exactly what the 1996 immigration law does. It redefines the

term "aggravated felony," which sounds so horrible to cover virtually every crime ever committed. It is retroactive, covering crimes decades ago. It denies basic constitutional protections such as bail and visitation rights. Again, I repeat, we are talking about legal immigrants, immigrants residing in this country in a legal fashion.

The law that was passed in 1996 removes the authority of immigration judges to take into account a person's contributions to our society as well as any past misdeeds. The law removes Federal judges' oversight over the immigration process. It allows INS, Immigration and Naturalization Service, deportation officials to pick someone up after they apply for citizenship, put them in detention maybe in the middle of the night without their relatives knowing where they were and hold them without bail. Mr. Speaker, this is America. This has to stop. We must start to restore justice and fairness to immigration proceedings.

Let me just give my colleagues a few examples of how this law is splintering families in the San Diego area. Just yesterday, I received a letter from 13-year-old Aida. Her father had always been a good provider; but in the middle of the night, he was picked up by the INS, handcuffed in front of his children and deported. Now his family has to rely on welfare.

Allan is 34 years old and came to the United States when he was 16. He was arrested for grand theft in his 20s and served a 3-year sentence. But today, many years later, he faces deportation despite doctors' diagnoses of attention deficit disorder and possibly Tourette's syndrome. Several doctors said he should be treated for mental illness rather than being incarcerated further for crimes for which he has already paid his price.

Juan, who is 44, has been in the United States since he was a young man. He was convicted of drunken driving and served 7 months of a year sentence. This sentence was expunged from his record by California courts, but still the INS picked him up at his home at 2 in the morning. He served more time in detention while waiting for deportation than he did for his original DUI.

I repeat, Mr. Speaker, this is America. Here we do not allow unconstitutional actions. Here, actions do have consequences; but we have a system of checks and balances to ensure that no branch of government can ride roughshod over our rights.

Mr. Speaker, I propose to roll back the draconian provisions of this 1996 law. My own bill, H.R. 3272, the Keeping Families Together Act, would do the following, and I repeat, this is for legal immigrants. It would restore the previous definition of aggravated felon so people would not be dragged into jail for very minor crimes. It eliminates the retroactivity sections so minor crimes from decades ago are not counted against the immigrant. It restores

previous standards so as to allow a judge to take into account community ties before deciding on deportation. It eases mandatory detention requirements for immigrants who have completed their sentences or probation. It reinstates the authority of Federal courts to review immigration matters. And it does ensure, Mr. Speaker, that murderers, rapists, and terrorists, true aggravated felons, the people we want to deport, would still be deported.

Mr. Speaker, we need to start here. We need to start to restore fairness so that our Pledge of Allegiance truly means with liberty and justice for all. We must stop the practices that would shame anyone who reveres our constitutional system.

LITHUANIAN INDEPENDENCE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in celebration of another year of independence for Lithuania. While some may consider this the 10th anniversary of the day many brave Lithuanians faced the Soviet tanks to restore freedom, it is truly the 82nd anniversary of Lithuanian Independence Day. As a Lithuanian American, I am proud of my ancestry and what Lithuania stands for, such as resilience, determination, tenacity and pride. What I find especially promising about the Lithuanian people is how far they have come after reestablishing independence just 10 years ago.

Today, Lithuania is a vibrant economic power in central Europe. In 1998, Lithuania had the lowest inflation rate in Central and Eastern Europe and privatized 344 companies. I am sure that the 1999 numbers will be just as encouraging. Additionally, Lithuania continues to contribute to the security of the Baltic region by implementing key defense programs and priorities.

First of all, the Seimas has already approved a 10-year defense spending program which will reach 2.5 percent of the GDP by 2005. This increase in spending will ensure that appropriate equipment will be procured and critical troop reforms will be made. The additional spending will also secure Lithuanian interoperability with NATO forces. While Lithuania already participates in some NATO forces, interoperability will again prove Lithuania's readiness to join NATO as a full-fledged member.

However, entrance into NATO and defense spending are only one aspect of such a diverse country. Trade, economic development, and foreign investment will help to strengthen Lithuania not only in Europe but across the globe. Today, out of the top 10 foreign investors in Lithuania, only three are American companies: Williams, Phillip Morris, and Coca-Cola. As the government continues to privatize industries and services throughout the country,